

What is claimed is:

CLAIMS

1. A method for examining an electronic representation of an item for a watermark, the method comprising:

5 examining at least a first electronic representation of an item for a watermark in accordance with a first watermark definition;

receiving a signal indicating that a second watermark definition is to be used for examining electronic representations; and

10 examining at least a second electronic representation of an item for a watermark in accordance with the second watermark definition.

2. A method according to claim 1 and also comprising:

15 controlling access to at least the second electronic representation based, at least in part, on a result of the examining at least a second electronic representation step.

3. A method according to claim 1 and wherein the first electronic representation and the second electronic representation are identical.

20 4. A method according to claim 1 and wherein the signal comprises a representation of the second watermark definition.

5. A method according to claim 1 and also comprising:

25 retrieving the second watermark definition from a storage device in response to the received signal.

6. A method according to claim 1 and also comprising computing the second watermark definition in response to the received signal.

30 7. A method according to claim 1 and wherein the first watermark definition and the second watermark definition each comprises an indication of a location, within each electronic representation to be examined, at which a

watermark, if present, is to be found.

8. A method according to claim 1 and wherein the first watermark definition and the second watermark definition each comprises an indication of a watermarking method according to which each electronic representation to be examined is to be examined for a watermark.

9. A method according to claim 1 and wherein the signal comprises authentication information for establishing that the signal originates from an authentic source, and

the receiving step also includes:

verifying the authentication information to determine whether the authentication information is correct and rejecting the received signal if the authentication information is determined to be incorrect, thereby causing the first watermark definition to continue to be used for examining if the authentication information is incorrect.

10. A watermark examiner for examining an electronic representation of an item for a watermark, the examiner comprising:

a watermark definition store operative to store a watermark definition;

watermark examination apparatus operatively associated with the watermark definition store and operative to examine an electronic representation of an item for a watermark in accordance with the watermark definition stored in the watermark definition store; and

a watermark definition signal receiver operative to receive a signal indicating that a new watermark definition is to be used for examining electronic representations and to store the new watermark definition in the watermark definition store.

11. A watermark examiner according to claim 10 and wherein the watermark definition comprises an indication of a location, within each electronic

representation to be examined, at which a watermark, if present, is to be found.

12. A watermark examiner according to claim 10 and wherein the watermark definition comprises an indication of a watermarking method according to which each electronic representation to be examined is to be examined for a watermark.

13. A watermark examiner according to claim 10 and wherein the signal comprises a representation of the second watermark definition.

14. A watermark examiner according to claim 10 and wherein the watermark examiner also comprises a watermark storage memory for storing at least one watermark definition, and

the watermark definition signal receiver is operative to retrieve the new watermark definition from the watermark storage memory in response to the received signal.

15. A watermark examiner according to claim 10 and wherein the watermark definition signal receiver is also operative to compute the second watermark definition in response to the received signal.

16. A watermark examiner according to claim 10 and wherein the signal comprises authentication information for establishing that the signal originates from an authentic source, and

the watermark definition signal receiver also includes:
signal verification apparatus operative to verify the authentication information to determine whether the authentication information is correct and to reject the received signal if the authentication information is determined to be incorrect, thereby causing the first watermark definition to continue to be used for examining if the authentication information is incorrect.

17. A method for altering an electronic representation of an item having

a watermark, the method comprising:

providing a first electronic representation of an item, the first electronic representation comprising a first watermark, the first watermark corresponding to a first watermark definition;

5 receiving a signal indicating that a second watermark definition is to be used; and

altering the first electronic representation to comprise a second watermark corresponding to the second watermark definition.

10 18. A method according to claim 17 and wherein said altering step comprises:

altering the first electronic representation to no longer comprise the first watermark.

15 19. A method according to claim 17 and also comprising:
examining at least a second electronic representation for the second watermark.

20 20. A method according to claim 19 and wherein the first electronic representation and the second electronic representation are identical.

21. A method according to claim 19 and also comprising:
controlling access to at least the second electronic representation based, at least in part, on a result of the examining at least a second electronic
25 representation step.

22. A watermark alteration system for altering an electronic representation of an item having a watermark, the system comprising:

30 a watermark definition signal receiver for receiving a signal indicating that a second watermark definition is to be used; and

watermark alteration apparatus for altering a first electronic representation, the first electronic representation comprising a first watermark

corresponding to a first watermark definition, to comprise a second watermark corresponding to the second watermark definition.

23. A system according to claim 22 and wherein said altering comprises:

altering the first electronic representation to no longer comprise the first watermark.

24. A system according to claim 22 and also comprising:

watermark examining apparatus for examining at least a second electronic representation for the second watermark.

25. A system according to claim 24 and wherein the first electronic representation and the second electronic representation are identical.

26. A system according to claim 24 and wherein the watermark examining apparatus is also operative to control access to at least the second electronic representation based, at least in part, on a result of the examining of the at least a second electronic representation.

27. A signal for indicating to a watermark examiner that a second watermark definition is to be used in place of a first watermark definition for examining electronic representations, the signal comprising:

a representation of a second watermark definition.

28. A signal according to claim 27 and also comprising:

authentication information for establishing that the signal originates from an authentic source.